INCOMING TELEGRAM Department of State

POL 14 VIETS

Saigon 3600

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
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TS AUTH. 144139 DEACON(S)
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AUGUST 16

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FOR KAPLAN FROM ZORTHIAN

ELECTION PRESS COVERAGE

1. CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY ELECTION IS BEGINNING TO ATTRACT MAJOR PRESS ATTENTION AND AS SEPTEMBER ELEVEN BALLOTING APPROACHES MAY WELL COMPETE FOR LEAD ATTRACTION WITH COVERAGE OF FIGHTING. WIRE SERVICES AND NETWORKS, WHO HAVE TENDED TO CONCENTRATE ON MORE SPECTACULAR MILITARY ASPECTS, AS WELL AS MORE SERIOUS SPECIALS AMONG FOREIGN PRESS CORPS ARE ADDRESSING INCREASING ATTENTION TO ELECTION AND IN PARTICULAR TO RELATIONSHIP OF U.S. MISSION TO THIS BALLOTING.

PAGE TWO RUMJIR 3600 C O N F I D E N T I A L

2. THE PROBLEM FOR JUSPAO PRESS OPERATIONS WILL BE TO DIRECT PRESS ATTENTION TO POSITIVE ASPECTS OF VOTING PROCEDURE AND TO ATTEMPT TO PORTRAY IT AS A MANIFESTATION OF GROWING POLITICAL STABILITY AND A STEP TOWARD RESTORATION OF CIVIL RULE. NEWSMEN WILL BE LOOKING FOR SENSATIONAL ASPECTS. THEY ARE ALREADY SEARCHING FOR STORIES OF U.S. QUOTE INTERFERENCE UNQUOTE, DICTATION OF CANDIDATES, AND OVERT PARTICIPATION IN SUPPORT OF KY GOVERNMENT. QUESTIONS ARE BEING ASKED, AND WILL INCREASE, AS TO HOW AN ELECTION CAN BE CONDUCTED FAIRLY IN MIDST OF WAR, IN A COUNTRY WITH PRESS CENSORSHIP, AND WITH CANDIDACY RESTRICTED FOR COMMUNIST AND PRO-COMMUNIST NEUTRALISTS. THERE WILL BE A TENDENCY TO BLAME THE U.S. FOR ANY SHORTCOMINGS, AND IN THE CASE OF SUCCESSES WE MUST COUNT ON SOME STORIES NOTED TO AN QUOTE IN SPITE OF UNQUOTE APPROACH.

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3. JUSPAO PRESS OPERATION HAS ESTABLISHED A SPECIAL TASK FORCE TO WORK WITH OTHER ELEMENTS OF JUSPAO AND THE MISSION TO MAKE MATERIAL AVAILABLE TO COUNTER THESE NEGATIVE APPROACHES AND TO PORTRAY

PAGE THREE RUMJIR 3600 C O N F I D E N T I A L
THE VOTING AS A TRULY EFFECTIVE FURTHER STEP TOWARD SVN'S NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT.

4. IN COOPERATION WITH MACIO A PROJECT HAS BEEN LAUNCHED TO PROVIDE ADEQUATE LOGISTIC SUPPORT TO MOVE NEWSMEN OUT OF SAIGON TO VARIOUS KEY PROVINCIAL CAPITALS TO SEE AT FIRST HAND THE ELECTION PREPARATIONS, THE BALLOTING ON SEPTEMBER ELEVENTH, AND SUBSEQUENT PROCEDURES TO SAFEGUARD AND COUNT THE VOTES.

5. WITH HELP OF EMBASSY POLITICAL SECTION SEVERAL BACKGROUND CONFERENCES HAVE BEEN HELD FOR SELECTED NEWSMEN TO EXPLAIN ELECTION PROCEDURES, CERTIFICATION OF LISTS, AND TO DESCRIBE THE VARIOUS CANDIDATES AND PARTY ACTIVITIES. OTHERS ARE SCHEDULED AS THE PREPARATIONS ADVANCE. SPECIAL BRIEFINGS HAVE BEEN HELD FOR THE JAPANESE PRESS CORPS AND SELECTED INDIVIDUAL CORRESPONDENTS.

6. SEVERAL DOZEN NEWSMEN ALREADY HAVE INDICATED THEY WILL BE IN THE COUNTRY SPECIALLY FOR THE ELECTION. PLANS HAVE BEEN MADE TO BRIEF THEM AND PROVIDE BACKGROUND AND INFORMATION MATERIAL.

PAGE FOUR RUMJIR 3600 C O N F I D E N T I A L
7. A USEFUL THEME IS ALREADY DEVELOPING IN THE VIET CONG ATTACKS AGAINST THE ELECTION AND IN THE STATEMENTS OF HANOI AND THE VC ATTACKING CANDIDATES, THREATENING TERROR AND INTERFERENCE WITH THE VOTING PROCESS. MUCH USEFUL MATERIAL ON THE VC CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE ELECTION IS AVAILABLE FROM INTELLIGENCE SOURCES AND IS BEING EXPLOITED FOR BOTH IN-COUNTRY AND EXTERNAL USE.

8. IN ALL INFORMATION APPROACHES TO ELECTION, JUSPAO IS WORKING CLOSELY WITH VIETNAMESE INFORMATION AUTHORITIES. OUR EFFORT IS TO ENCOURAGE THEM TO CARRY BURDEN OF TELLING ELECTION STORY AND TO SHOW THEM HOW TO DO SO AND, WHEN NECESSARY, TO LEND FACILITIES AND

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IMPETUS TO THEIR EFFORT. WHERE THEY FAIL WE WILL QUIETLY TRY TO FILL IN THE GAPS WITH FOREIGN NEWSMEN. NEW MINISTER INFORMATION NGUYEN BAO TRI WANTS STRENGTHEN PRESS EFFORT THIS REGARD AND IF NECESSARY JUSPAO WILL LEND HIM EXPERIENCED OFFICER AS ADVISER. MISSION PLANS OUR OWN PRESS BRIEFINGS ON ELECTIONS, POLITICAL OFFICER NEXT WEEK WILL DISCUSS LISTS AND PROGRESS OF MACHINERY TO-DATE AT THURSDAY NIGHT

PAGE FIVE RUMJIR 3600 C O N F I S E N T I A L
BACKGROUNDER.

9. THEN ON THREE LEVELS ON CONTINUING BASIS SMALL GROUP SELECT CORRESPONDENTS WILL GET TOP BRIEFINGS FROM SENIOR MISSION OFFICERS. SECOND, LARGER GROUP, WILL BE GIVEN MORE ROUTINE RUNDOWNS BY POLITICAL SECTION, PRIMARILY JOHN BURKE. OTHERS WILL BE BRIEFED BY JUSPAO PRESS OFFICERS WHO ALSO WILL GIVE INDIVIDUAL BACKGROUNDERS AS WARRANTED.

10. SPECIAL EFFORT WILL BE MADE BY LANGUAGE OFFICERS TO FILL IN JAPANESE, PHILIPPINE; OTHER PRESS AND SPECIAL BRIEFINGS PLANNED FOR VISITORS SUCH AS FRANK MORAES, IGLESIAS FROM ARGENTINA, ETC. GP-3 LODGE.
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